

Dear Region 6 Members,

With the 50th Yankee Dental Congress (YDC) in the rearview mirror I would like to hit some highlights of the Massachusetts Dental Society's (MDS) convention, one of the largest in the country. Some of the well-received events were the chowder tasting, Boston cream pies, adorable puppies, the Yankee casino, the student debate, cocktails/socializing with friends at the end of the day on Thursday/Friday at the MDS booth, and the Journey tribute band that really rocked! Special thanks to MDS Region 6's Dr. GiGi Garcia as YDC Chair and MDS Treasurer Dr. Jen Korzeb as the YDC's Swiss army knife for a memorable and entertaining show!

On Saturday morning, my class was canceled due to unforeseen circumstances, so I took the opportunity to quietly sit in as an observer of the American Dental Association (ADA) District 1 meeting. This meeting included the presidents and executive directors of the dental societies from the New England states, along with ADA District 1 Trustee Dr. Jonathan Knapp and ADA District 3 Trustee Dr. James Boyle from Pennsylvania

Discussion Highlights

Massachusetts: MDS President, Dr. Abe Abdul

- Discussed our recent wins in the state house with Governor Healy's last-hour signing of the Foreign Dentist Dental Hygiene Reciprocal Licensure Bill to help alleviate the dental hygiene workforce shortage crisis and the Dental Diversion Bill to maintain dental licensure for dentists and dental hygienists while they get treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues.
- The Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) win (Question 2) was the strongest MLR statute in the country.

New Hampshire Dental Society (NHDS) : President, Dr. Mark Hartzler

- NHDS tried to introduce a foreign dentist reciprocal hygiene bill, but it did not gain any traction. The MA bill was used, but there were no parameters for how the NH State Board of Dentistry was going to formulate any regulations.
- The NH Board instituted new CDA CE courses to expand the skills of dental assistants in the state.
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA) were trying to get sedation rules rewritten in NH, which had NH oral surgeons very upset, but lobbying got the bill pushed back to a committee where hopefully it will die
- NH is part of a five-state ADA new dentist membership pilot program for reduced new dentist ADA dues but is only one month into it. NHDS dues remained the same (Personally, I feel they should have followed the MDS lead, and reduced state dues for new dentists also).

Rhode Island Dental Association (RIDA): President, Dr. Andrew Gazerro

- RI MLR bill got passed and is now going through the same process as Mass.
- Facility fee bill passed for special needs patients to receive ambulatory or hospital surgical suite care despite insurance pushback. The fee arrived at \$1254. Main opposition was the unknown cost. Now, it needs the support of anesthesiologists because of ASA medical challenges with this population group which is far more medically compromised. Dental cases are not as financially attractive to hospital administrators as hip replacements. Many hospitals around New England have been increasingly restricting OR availability for dentistry. The CRNAs were really helpful.
- RIDA will next try to pass a foreign dentist Reciprocal Hygiene bill.

Vermont Dental Association (VDA) : Executive Director Patrick Gallivan:

- Support for dentist and dental hygienist compact.
- Got Medicaid reimbursement schedule raised from 55-60% to 75% of Northeast Delta Dental fee schedule stimulating a 9% increased provider participation.
- Mercer Hospital Detroit Dental School has 28 students who are going to locate to Vermont stimulated by a state/federal loan repayment program for \$50,000/year x 3 years with a match from their employers.
- Creating 40 chair Medicaid clinic.

Maine Dental Association (MDA) : Vice President, Dr. Hena Patel:

- ME legislature passed Maine MLR bill in 2022.
- MDA is fighting multiple anti-fluoride bills.
- Resilience (Wellness) Task Force bill introduced for dentistry following a recent medical wellness health care program just instituted in ME.
- No foreign dentist reciprocal dental hygiene bill filed yet due to fight by MDA to hold a dentist majority on the board 18 months ago. A bill was introduced by Maine Dental Hygiene Association (MDHA) proposing a hygienist expansion of two on the board which threatened to create a dentist minority. The bill later failed but impacted the relationship between the MDA and the MDHA.
- Studying a tax incentive bill to stimulate DA and DH to relocate to ME starting at \$12K/yr, raising incrementally to \$16K/yr over 6 years.

Connecticut Dental Association (CDA):

- Unfortunately, due to other duties, I had to step out of the room while CDA made their presentation.
- Upon my return, there was a long and heavy discussion with Dr. Knapp and Dr. Boyle on what the ADA needs to do on a national level about the present administration in Washington, DC turning the tide against good science, specifically about public water fluoridation and the recent Jan 6th *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) Pediatric Meta-analysis of “Fluoride Exposure and Children’s IQ Scores.”

Fluoride talking points have been provided by the ADA for dentists to dispense locally. Key talking points include: 100% of the anti-fluoride studies were all foreign; 60% of them were from China which has naturally higher levels of fluoride in their water sources along with confounding effects to those studies including multiple heavy metals in the public water supply due to poor filtration techniques. While the recent ten years of data from China is reliable, data from over ten years ago is dubious (as in made-up), the results heavily influenced by the government. ADA Trustees Dr. Knapp and Dr. Boyle were urged by all the NE state leaders that there needs to be a national message to the public from the ADA beyond the grassroots and state messages with the current political climate over fluoridation and anti-vax propaganda, including that the American Medical Association (AMA) needs to retract the JAMA article.

Look for more information in the ADA Huddle.



Dr. Albert J. Sandler
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